

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 02706 021034Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
SSM-03 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 /076 W  
-----087116 021039Z /10

P R 281752Z FEB 78 ZDK CITE NUMEROUS SVC'S  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1555  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION USUN NY  
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PBOR, PGOV, PINT, IS  
SUBJECT: LIBERALS ATTACK SHARON

1. SUMMARY: AT A KNESSET FACTION MEETING, LIBERAL  
MINISTERS AND MKS SUPPORTED THE LATEST CABINET DECISION  
ON SETTLEMENTS, BUT SHARPLY ATTACKED AGRICULTURE MINISTER  
SHARON FOR "CRAZY" AND "IDIOTIC" ACTIONS WHICH UNDER-  
MINDED THE GOVERNMENT'S CREDIBILITY TO THE POINT OF  
"BEING INJURIOUS TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST." SHARON  
FOUND NO DEFENDERS AMONG EVEN THE MORE HAWKISH LIBERALS.  
THE LIBERAL ATTACK ILLUSTRATES BOTH SHARON'S ISOLATION  
AND THE USE THAT IS BEING MADE OF HIM AS A LIGHTNING  
ROD FOR INTERNAL LIKUD CRITICISM ON FOREIGN POLICY  
MATTERS. END SUMMARY.  
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2. AT A MEETING OF THEIR KNESSET FACTION YESTERDAY,  
THE LIKUD LIBERALS INDORSED SUNDAY'S CABINET DECISION  
ON SETTLEMENTS BUT SHARPLY CRITICIZED AGRICULTURE  
MINISTER ARIK SHARON. IN A FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION OF  
THE CABINET DECISION, MINISTERS AND MKS VOICED SUPPORT

FOR THE CABINET'S SETTLEMENT PLAN BECAUSE, AS HOUSING MINISTER PATT PUT IT, "THIS IS THE ONLY BARGAINING POINT LEFT TO ISRAEL.....AFTER ISRAEL HAD GIVEN IN TO (SADAT) ON EVERY OTHER POINT." THE LIBERAL MINISTERS INTERPRETED THE CABINET RESOLUTION TO MEAN A FREEZE OF SETTLEMENTS IN RAFAH, AND NO NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK, EXCEPT FOR THE TWO PREVIOUSLY PLANNED.

3. ARIK SHARON WAS SOUNDLY CRITICIZED FOR UNAUTHORIZED IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY WHICH HAS IRREPARABLY DAMAGED ISRAEL'S CREDIBILITY IN WORLD PUBLIC OPINION. CITING THE WATER-DRILLING TOWERS AND THE SHILO FIASCO, MINISTERS AND MKS ATTACKED SHARON FOR "FAULTY AND RISKY" ACTS WHICH HAD "BLACKENED THE FACE OF THE STATE." SHARON WAS EVEN ATTACKED BY HAWKS SUCH AS MK PESAH GRUPPER, AND NOT A SINGLE LIBERAL MK RALLIED TO HIS DEFENSE. HOUSING MINISTER PATT WENT FURTHEST IN HIS CITITCISM, ACCUSING SHARON OF CARRYING OUT ACTS WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND IN CONTRAVENTION OF CABINET DECISIONS. THE JERUSALEM POST QUOTES PATT AS SAYING "THERE IS ONE MAN IN THE CABINET WHO OPPOSES EVERYBODY ELSE IN THE CABINET, AND THE ENTIRE CABINET IS LINED UP AGAINST THAT ONE MAN."

4. COMMENT: THIS OUTSPOKEN AND UNAIMOUS VERBAL ASSAULT ON SHARON IMPLICITLY INDICATES STRONG LIBERAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUPPORT FOR WEIZMAN AND AT THE SAME TIME VIVIDLY UNDERSCORES THE ISOLATED POSITION WHICH SHARON NOW OCCUPIES IN THE CABINET. SHARON'S PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS HAVE PROVIDED THOSE (IN THE LIBERAL PARTY AND DMC) WHO ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH A HANDY TARGET FOR CRITICISM. OPEN DISSENT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER IS STILL TABOO IN THE LIKUD, AND SHARON'S LIGHTNING ROD FUNCTION THEREFORE SERVES BOTH BEGIN AND THE MORE DOVISH ELEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE LIBERALS AND OTHERS WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE USE OF SHARON IN THIS WAY. THE QUESTION REMAINS: HOW LONG BEGIN WILL BE ABLE TO SUPPORT SHARON IF HE BECOMES INCREASINGLY ISOLATED, AND AT WHAT POINT SHARON MIGHT DECIDE TO BAIL OUT. LEWIS

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NNN

\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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**Subject:** LIBERALS ATTACK SHARON  
**TAGS:** PBOR, PGOV, PINT, IS, PBOR, PINT, (SHARON, ARIEL)  
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